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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 003185

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STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AND AF/RSA FOR WHALDEMAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [UNSC](#) [EU](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: USAU: AU TO LEAD DELEGATION TO MAURITANIA
REF: ADDIS ABABA 3066

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN A. SIMON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (U) Summary: A high-level delegation from the African Union (AU) and partner international organizations will travel to Mauritania within the next three weeks to meet with ousted President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and junta leader General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz to find a way out of the political crisis. The decision to send a delegation was made during a November 21 consultative meeting of the AU and the international community, and was announced in a communique issued that evening. The communique also reaffirmed the international community's resolve to press the junta to restore constitutional order by returning President Abdallahi to power. Should this AU-led effort fail, the communique left open the possibility of referring the matter to the UNSC as well as the use of sanctions targeting the junta. End Summary.

12. (U) On November 21, the AU convened a consultative meeting in Addis Ababa with the international community to continue searching for a solution to the Mauritanian political crisis. The meeting was a follow-up to the November 10 meeting in Addis that produced a communique giving the junta until November 20 to demonstrate to the European Union that they were taking positive steps to give the reins of power back to President Abdallahi, who was ousted in an August 6 coup d'etat. The communique issued after the November 10 meeting called for the unconditional release of President Abdallahi and his contribution as the President to the search for a solution. It also called for the participation of all the stakeholders, and for the full respect of the Constitution.

13. (U) Given the junta's failure to respond satisfactorily to the will of the international community by the November 20 deadline, and given the junta's reported maneuvering to consolidate their authority, participants at the November 21 meeting had the task of crafting a new communique aimed at applying further pressure on the military rulers. The deliberations lasted approximately five hours and included separate interventions by French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, in Addis for the AU-EU Troika meeting, and AU Commission Chairperson Jean Ping. The text of the communique can be found at the end of this message.

14. (U) At the suggestion of the UN and the League of Arab States, a decision was taken to dispatch - within the next three weeks -- a high-level delegation composed of representatives from the AU, the EU, the UN, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the International Organization of the Francophonie, to Mauritania to meet separately with President Abdallahi and coup leader General Aziz. (Note: Exact travel dates are still to be

worked out among the various organizations. End note.) The delegation's goal will be to engage Abdallahi and Aziz &to envisage a consensual way out of the crisis,8 according to the communique. These organizations, as well as the UNSC P-5 and African representatives that were included in both the November 10 and 21 consultative meetings in Addis, are scheduled to convene again on December 12 to consider next steps. That deadline also gives the EU sufficient time to report to its ministerial council.

15. (C) French Foreign Minister Kouchner addressed the meeting for about a half-hour, vacillating between a firm stance against the coup and seeking some accommodation. He said in the &new Africa,8 it is important &that we underscore that constitutional order and good governance are the right path and coup d'etats must be condemned outright.8 But Kouchner said he was not personally supportive of sanctions, and noted the coup had been &bloodless.8 He ended by saying that the international community &cannot remain indifferent8 on the Mauritanian issue. &We should keep pressuring the Mauritanian junta.8

16. (SBU) In the ensuing debate, participants took note of the fact that the junta had transferred President Abdallahi to his home village of Lemden where he was free to meet and speak with visitors, including foreign diplomats and the media. The Arab League saw this transfer as a positive step upon which the international community could build. But this window of freedom might not remain open much longer, said the Ambassador, who admonished meeting participants not to soften their stance adopted on November 10 and to continue speaking

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with one voice to the junta. AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra echoed the Ambassador's concerns. Abdallahi &is really scared that his freedom to communicate with the rest of the world might be cut off,8 Lamamra said, recounting a recent telephone conversation he had with the deposed president. The communique notes that Abdallahi &remains deprived of the prerogatives of his high office.8

17. (U) The EU described the two sides in Mauritania as being at an impasse, with President Abdallahi steadfast in his refusal to resign from power and General Aziz insisting that Abdallahi only be allowed to return to the political scene as a &former president.8 For its part, the Organization for the Francophonie (OIF) saw &no progress on the part of the Mauritanian authorities to return to constitutional order.8 The OIF was disturbed by what it saw as &signs of a hardening8 on the part of the junta, including evidence that they are actively streamlining the administration in their bid to stay in power.

18. (SBU) Participants agreed that, should the current efforts fail, the AU should consider the &possibility8 of referring the matter to the UNSC, along with &concrete measures.8 This would occur alongside potential EU action, as well as action by other organizations present, which could target individual junta members. The intent was to remind the junta that they risked sanctions and isolation if they failed to respond to the request of the international community.

19. (U) Unlike the November 10 communique, the November 21 communique left the door open for presidential elections &as a step within a comprehensive, peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis, which would be acceptable to the people of Mauritania and supported by the international community.8

110. (U) During his brief appearance at the meeting, AU Chairperson Ping acknowledged the general consensus among participants on the need to dispatch a delegation to Mauritania as well as the need to &take effective action.8

111. (C) Comment: The room was divided between the League of

Arab States on one side consistently pushing for the softest language possible, sometimes with support of the OIC, and the UN and the U.S. on the other side who wanted a harder line against the junta. The OIF also took a hard line, but rarely intervened. The EU and French worked with the AU Commission to seek a middle ground, but were very quick to accommodate the Arab League in the interest of keeping the group together and perhaps due to internal dissent within the EU ranks. End Comment.

¶12. (U) The text to which the Consultative Meeting on the Situation in Mauritania agreed follows:

BEGIN TEXT OF COMMUNIQUE

As agreed by the consultative meeting on the situation in Mauritania held in Addis Ababa on 10 November 2008, another consultative meeting on the situation in Mauritania was held, at the initiative of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), H.E. Mr. Jean Ping, in Addis Ababa, on 21 November 2008, on the margins of the meeting of the Troikas of the European Union (EU) and the AU. This meeting brought together the following organizations: the AU, the EU, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF), and the United Nations. The meeting was held in the presence of H.E. Mr. Jean Ping and H.E. Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of France, President of the Council of the EU.

The participants noted that, after the joint communique issued at the end of the consultative meeting of 10 November and marking the need for new proposals from the authorities born out of the coup d'etat of 6 August 2008 to enable the restoration of the constitutional order, these authorities did not send either to the AU or the EU any new element regarding the document submitted to the AU on 4 November 2008, and this response was deemed inappropriate by the international community.

The participants recalled the communique of 10 November 2008, in particular the elements for the resolution of the

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Mauritanian crisis contained therein: the release without any condition of President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, his contribution as the President to the search for a solution, the participation of all the stakeholders, and the full respect of the Constitution. Within this framework, this could lead to the organization of free and fair presidential elections as a step within a comprehensive, peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis, which would be acceptable to the people of Mauritania and supported by the international community.

The participants supported the communique of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) of 11 November 2008 and encouraged the AU, should the current efforts fail, to include among the concrete measures to be taken upon the proposal of the AU Commission the possibility of seizing the UN Security Council with the matter, alongside the procedures of the appropriate organs of the EU.

The participants expressed the intention of their respective organizations to draw conclusions from the present stalemate and to take, in due course, appropriate measures, notably individual measures, on the basis of their respective procedures.

The participants took note of the transfer of President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi to the village of Lemden where he is now in a position to communicate with and receive visitors and the fact that he could speak in his capacity as the President of the Republic, though he remains deprived of the prerogatives of his high office.

Given that the President can now receive and speak to visitors, the participants agreed to dispatch to Mauritania, before their next meeting, a high-level delegation to be led by the AU and to comprise the representatives of the EU, the League of Arab States, the OIC, the OIF and the UN. This delegation is mandated to consult with President Sidi Ould Mohamed Abdallahi and General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, to engage them to envisage a consensual way out of the crisis including the key elements mentioned in paragraph 3 above.

The participants reiterated their commitment to continue their close coordination on the matter. To that end, they agreed to hold their next meeting in Brussels, on 12 December 2008.

The participants met with the permanent members and the African members of the UN Security Council, with whom they had in-depth discussions on the situation. The members of the Security Council reaffirmed their full support to the efforts of the AU and partner organizations, and reiterated their readiness to review the situation in light of the evolution of the efforts aimed at resolving the crisis and restoring constitutional order in Mauritania. They endorsed this communique.

Addis Ababa, 21 November 2008

END TEXT OF COMMUNIQUE
YAMAMOTO